

Characters

- MAE: A spirited young woman. She is single-minded and determined, a believer. She is mid-twenties.
- LLOYD: A simple and good-hearted young man. He is ungainly and unkempt. His shoulders slope, his stomach protrudes, some of his teeth are missing. At the start of the play, illness contributes to his poor appearance. He is mid-twenties.
- HENRY: A large man. He has a natural sense of dignity, a philosophical mind. He can barely read. He is mid-fifties.

The set is a wooden room which sits on an earth promontory. The promontory is five feet high and covers the same periphery as the room. The wood has the color and texture of bone that has dried in the sun. It is ashen and cold. The earth in the promontory is red and soft and so is the earth around it. There is no greenery. Behind the promontory there is a vast blue sky. On the back wall of the room there is an oversized fireplace which is the same color and texture as the walls and floor. On each side of the fireplace there are narrow doors. The door to the right leads to the exterior. There is a blue sky. The one to the left leads to a dark corridor. In the center of the room there is a kitchen table. There is a chair on each end. Down right there is an ironing board. There is an iron on it and a pair of trousers. Against the back wall on the left there is another chair. After the first scene these three chairs will always be placed around the table and will be referred to as right, center, and left. Against the right wall there is a bench. On it there is a pile of unpressed trousers. On the table there is a pile of pressed trousers. Under the bench, there is a bundle of women's clothes and a pair of old, flat women's shoes. Inside the fireplace there are two cardboard boxes. One is full and tied with a string, the other is empty. On the mantelpiece there are, from right to left: a brown paper bag with a pamphlet in it, a pot with three metal plates and three spoons stacked upon it, a plate with broken bread, a pitcher with milk, a textbook, a notebook and pencil, a dish with string beans, a folded newspaper and a box with pills. Between the fireplace and the door to the left there are an ax and a rifle.

Offstage there is an empty box the same size as the box tied with a string. The following props are carried by the actors as they enter to perform the scene:

Mae: 2 bundles of clothes and a loose clean rag.

Lloyd: 3 coins, a prescription note and a cup with oatmeal and a spoon.

Henry: lipstick wrapped in paper, a small mirror, a notebook, bills and pencil, loose coins, a tin cup of milk, and a wad of bills.

At the end of each scene a freeze is indicated. These freezes will last eight seconds which will create the effect of a still photograph. When the freeze is broken, the actors will make the necessary set changes and proceed to perform the following scene.

Act 1

Act 1, Scene 1

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Lloyd sits left. He is unwashed and unshaven. He has a fever. He is clumsy and badly coordinated. Mae is at the ironing board. She is unkempt.

LLOYD

You think you learn a lot at school?

MAE

I do.

LLOYD

What do you learn?

MAE

Subjects.

LLOYD

What is subjects?

MAE

Different things.

LLOYD

What things?

MAE

You want to know?

LLOYD

What are they?

MAE

Arithmetic.

LLOYD

Big deal arithmetic. I know arithmetic.

MAE

I'll bet.

LLOYD

Don't talk back to me. I'll kick your ass.

MAE

Fuck you, Lloyd. I'm telling you about arithmetic and you talk to me like that? You're a moron. I won't tell you anything.

LLOYD

Oh, no?

MAE

No.

LLOYD

So what's arithmetic?

MAE

Fuck you. I'm not telling you.

LLOYD

(Moving toward her.)

I'll fuck you till you're blue in the face!

(He stops and starts back to the chair.)

I don't even want to fuck you.

MAE

You can't, that's why. You can't get it up.

LLOYD

Oh yeah? I got it up yesterday!

MAE

When!

LLOYD

Afternoon!

MAE

Never saw it.

LLOYD

You weren't here.

MAE

Where was I?

LLOYD

At school. You missed it. I got it up.

MAE

Who with?

LLOYD

Fuck you. I'm not telling you.

MAE

Who with?

LLOYD

With myself.--I don't need someone. I got it up right here.

(Pointing to the wall.)

See that? I did that! From here. I didn't give it to you or anyone.

(*Pantomiming an erection and ejaculation.*)

I held it as long as I wanted. Then I gave it to the wall.

(*Pointing to a spot on the wall.*)

See. Fuck you, Mae.

MAE

Fuck you, Lloyd.

LLOYD

So tell me!

MAE

Tell you what.

LLOYD

What's arithmetic?

MAE

It's numbers.

LLOYD

Oh yeah!

MAE

Yeah!

LLOYD

Why didn't you say it's numbers!--I know numbers.

MAE

You don't know numbers.

LLOYD

Yes I do.

(*He stands.*)

I'm Lloyd. I have two pigs. My mother died. I was seven. My father left. He is dead.

(*He gets three coins from his pocket.*)

This is money. It's mine. It's three nickels. I'm Lloyd. That's arithmetic.

MAE

That is not arithmetic.

LLOYD

Why not?

MAE

It isn't.

LLOYD

(*He returns to the chair.*)

It's numbers!

MAE

Arithmetic is more!

LLOYD

What more!

MAE

A lot more!--Multiplication!

LLOYD

Come here!

(*She puts the iron down.*)

MAE

What for!

LLOYD

I'm going to show you something.

MAE

(*She walks to him.*)

What!

LLOYD

(*In one move he takes her hand, crosses his left leg, and puts her hand on his crotch.*)

Feel it!

MAE

What?

LLOYD

It! It! Touch it!

MAE

I'm touching it!

LLOYD

Do something to it!

MAE

What!

LLOYD

Anything, stupid!

MAE

Let go of my hand!

LLOYD

(*Pressing her tighter.*)

What hand?

MAE

Let go, you jerk! You stink! You smell bad!

LLOYD

So what!

MAE

You're disgusting!

LLOYD

No kidding!

MAE

Let go!

(*She steps on his foot.*)

LLOYD

Shit!

(*She goes back to the ironing board.*)

I'll kick your ass!

(*He feels his genitals.*)

Shit, it's gone!

MAE

What's gone! You can't get it up! You have some sickness there!

(*Short pause.*)

You should go to a doctor.

LLOYD

Didn't I say I got it up yesterday!

MAE

Yes. You did.

LLOYD

OK! So I did!--So where's dinner!

MAE

I don't know where's dinner.

LLOYD

You know where's dinner!

MAE

You know where's dinner!

LLOYD

Yeah, where's dinner! Dinner's in a pot on the stove! Dinner's on the table! It's in the cupboard! It's dried up in the pot! Dinner is somewhere! It's spilled on the floor! Where's dinner!

(*There is a pause.*)

Where's dinner!

(*She continues ironing.*)

Come here!

MAE

Fuck you.

LLOYD

You're a whore!

MAE

I'm pressing, jerk! What are you doing! I'm pressing. What are you doing!

(*He looks away.*)

I'm pressing what are you doing! You're a jerk.

(*She continues ironing.*)

I work. See, I work. I'm working. I learned to work. I wake up and I work. Open my eyes and I work. I work. What do you do! Yeah, what do you do!-*Work!*

LLOYD

So what.

(*He sits in a corner on the floor.*)

MAE

What do you do when you open your eyes. I work, jerk. You're a pig. You'll die like a pig in the mud. You'll rot there in the mud. No one will bury you. Your skin will bloat. In the mud. Then, it will get blue like rotten meat and it will bloat even more. And you will get so rotten that the dogs will puke when they come near you. Even flies won't go near you. You'll just lay there and rot.

(*She irons.*)

I'm going to die in a hospital. In white sheets. You hear?

(*She looks front.*)

Clean feet. Injections. That's how I'm going to die. I'm going to die clean. I'm going to school and I'm learning things. You're stupid. I'm not. When I finish school I'm leaving. You hear that? You can stay in the mud.

(*She irons.*)

Did you pick the corn?

LLOYD

What corn?

MAE

The corn I told you to pick.

LLOYD

There is no corn.

MAE

How come there is no corn.

LLOYD

The groundhog ate it.

MAE

You let him eat it.

LLOYD

I didn't.

MAE

You didn't watch it.

LLOYD

I came in to sleep. I had to sleep.

MAE

You can sleep in the field.

LLOYD

It's wet there! It's cold! I'm sick! You sleep there!

MAE

I work here, not in the field.

LLOYD

I'll work here. You work there.

MAE

(*Harshly.*)

I wish you went to the doctor.--You're not going to get well if you don't. When I leave you'll starve.

LLOYD

I'll find food.

MAE

Where?

LLOYD

Anywhere. There's food.

MAE

Where.

LLOYD

There's pigslop.

MAE

What pigslop? There won't be any pigslop. Not if you don't grow something to put in it!

(*Pause.*)

LLOYD

I did it to Betsy.

MAE

You did.

LLOYD

Yeah.--I felt bad.--My head hurt.--I went to her. She's nice. She lets me eat her food.--I did it to her.--I got it up. I got it in her all the way.--It didn't hurt.

MAE

No kidding.

LLOYD

It didn't hurt.

MAE

You don't fuck pigs.

LLOYD

She liked it.

MAE

I'll bet.

LLOYD

What do you mean?

MAE

Did you get clean before you did it?

LLOYD

What for? I'm clean.

MAE

No you're not. You stink.

LLOYD

She didn't mind.

MAE

(*She places the ironing board alongside the right wall and places the garment she has pressed on top of the other pressed clothes.*)

I'm taking these up now. We'll walk to the clinic. You have to see a doctor.

(*She starts putting on her shoes.*)

Put on your shoes, Lloyd.--I'll walk there with you. I know you won't get there if I don't go with you. Get moving, Lloyd.

(*She takes the clothes and goes to the door.*)

Come on.

(*He doesn't move.*)

Let's go, Lloyd.

(*He stands and goes for the ax. He holds the ax as he waits for her to exit.*)

You're not going to the clinic with an ax.

LLOYD

(*He goes to the chair still holding the ax and sits.*)

Why not.

MAE

You can't.

LLOYD

I'll take my knife, then.

MAE

You can't take your knife either.

LLOYD

I won't go then.

(*They freeze.*)

Act 1, Scene 2

Scene 2

Mae takes a brown paper bag from the mantelpiece, opens the right door, steps on the threshold and turns front as if she had just come from the outside. She has an air of serenity. Lloyd sits on the left. His appearance has worsened.

MAE

I went to the clinic, Lloyd. And I told them what you have.

LLOYD

What did you tell them?

MAE

(*Stepping into the room.*)

I told them you're sick. And I told them what you have.

LLOYD

What did they say?

MAE

They said you have to go there.

(*As she gets the chair from the left corner and places it center.*)

You have to go to the clinic. They won't give you medicine till you go.

LLOYD

I'm not going.

MAE

They have to give you a test. They can't give you medicine till they find out what you have. They said you may have something bad.

LLOYD

What.

MAE

(*She sits.*)

They didn't say.

(*She takes a pamphlet out of the paper bag.*)

They gave me this book.

LLOYD

What does it say?

MAE

(*She places the paper bag on the mantelpiece.*)

I couldn't read it. I tried to read it but I can't. I got Henry to read it for you. He's outside.

LLOYD

Why can't you read it?

MAE

It's too difficult.

LLOYD

All that time at school and you can't read.

MAE

I tried to read it and it was too difficult. That's why I got Henry to read it because it was too difficult for me. It is advanced, I'm not advanced yet. I'm intermediate. I can read a lot of things but not this.--I'm going to let Henry in.

LLOYD

(*Reproachfully.*)

I wish you could have read it.

MAE

Me too. I wish I could have read it.

(*She opens the door and walks to the left of the center chair.*)

Come in, Henry.

(*Henry enters and stands by the fireplace. He places his left hand on the mantelpiece.*)

Sit down, Henry.

(*Henry sits on the center chair. Mae closes the door.*)

Here's Henry, Lloyd. He's going to read for you.

HENRY

Are you drunk, Lloyd? You look drunk.

MAE

(*Sitting on the right.*)

He's sick. He has a fever.

HENRY

Has he been drinking?

LLOYD

I am not drunk.

HENRY

What's wrong with him?

MAE

He's sick.

HENRY

Remember Ron, what happened to him.

LLOYD

What happened to him?

HENRY

He died.--And what did he die of?

LLOYD

He drank till he died.

MAE

His liver failed him.

HENRY

Why did his liver fail him? Alcohol.--Why did he drink? He drank because he owned alcohol. And why did he own alcohol? He owned alcohol because he owned a pharmacy. And why did that lead a man to drinking? Because he kept alcohol in the pharmacy.--There you have two things: alcohol and time to do nothing. So what happens? You drink yourself to death.--So, you have alcohol, you drink it. You don't have alcohol, you don't drink it. You have money to buy alcohol, you buy it. You don't have money to buy it, you don't buy it.--Does Lloyd have alcohol, Mae?

MAE

He has no money to buy it.

HENRY

If Lloyd had money he would drink. He'd be a drunk.

MAE

Yes, he would.

HENRY

If he's not a drunk it's because he's poor.

MAE

He is.--This is the book, Henry.

HENRY

(*Henry puts on his glasses. He reads each section first to himself in a low voice. Then he reads it out loud stumbling through the words at a high speed.*)

Prostatitis and Prostatosis. Acute and chronic bacterial infection of the prostate gland: symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment.

(*He wets his finger and turns the page.*)

Common symptoms of acute prostatitis and bacterial prostatosis are: febrile illness, back pains, perineal pain, irritative voiding, aching of the perineum, sexual pain, sexual impotency, painful ejaculation, and intermittent disureah, or bloody ejaculation.

LLOYD

What does that mean?

HENRY

I don't know what it means, Lloyd. These are medical terms. It needs study. This may require the use of a dictionary--a special dictionary. One that has medical terms--technical terms--probably a dictionary that would have all kinds of technical terms--from hardware and construction terms to scientific terms--like physics. There are such dictionaries.

(*Short pause.*)

You look swollen, Lloyd.

MAE

He is swollen.

HENRY

And your color is poor.

MAE

Show him your tongue, Lloyd. His tongue is white and his breath smells bad.

(*Lloyd opens his mouth. Henry looks at Lloyds tongue.*)

HENRY

What is wrong with you?

MAE

I want him to go to the doctor but he won't.

HENRY

Why won't you go to the doctor, Lloyd.

LLOYD

I don't want to go.

MAE

He will stay here and rot.

LLOYD

I won't rot. I said I'd go. You said I couldn't go.

MAE

He wanted to go up with an ax. He's an animal. You don't go to the clinic with an ax. You can't do that.

HENRY

Why would you do that, Lloyd?

LLOYD

I didn't do it. I never went.

HENRY

He does smell bad.

MAE

He's rotting away and he won't do anything about it. You better dig your grave while you can, Lloyd. Because I'm not going to do it for you. I told him to find a spot and dig it. It takes a strong person to dig that deep. I can't do it. I wouldn't, even if I could.

(*Pause.*)

Would you like some bread, Henry? I got some butter.

HENRY

Yes, thank you.

MAE

Would you like some dinner? We have soup.

HENRY

Yes, thank you.

MAE

Stay then, I haven't started it yet.

HENRY

I will, thank you.

(*They freeze.*)

Act 1, Scene 3

Scene 3

Mae places the pamphlet on the mantelpiece, then takes the pot, plates and spoons and places them on the table. They each take a spoon and plate, then they pass them to Mae, who holds the plates in her hands as if she were about to put them away, Lloyd lies on the floor, under the table, facing front. Henry moves his chair slightly to the left. He and Mae have been talking. They both speak with philosophical objectivity.

HENRY

Soon everything will be used only once. We will use things once. We will need to do that as our time will be of value and it will not be feasible to spend it caring for things: washing them, mending them, repairing them. We will use a car till it breaks down. Then, we will discard it. A radio or any machine or appliance will be discarded as soon as it breaks down. We will make a call on the telephone and a new one will be delivered. Already we see places that use paper cups, paper plates, paper towels.--Our time will not be wasted and we will choose how to spend it.

MAE

I don't think I'll be wanted in such a world.

HENRY

Why not?

MAE

... Oh.

(Pause.)

In such a world a person must be of value.

HENRY

Oh?

MAE

I feel I am hollow ... and offensive.

(As Mae places the dishes on the mantelpiece.)

HENRY

Why is that?

MAE

I think most people are.

HENRY

What do you mean?--Explain what you mean.

MAE

I don't think I can.

HENRY

I am not offensive. I don't think I am offensive. I think I am a decent man.

MAE

You are decent, Henry. I know you are, and so is Lloyd in his own way.

HENRY

Then, what do you mean when you say we are offensive?

MAE

I mean that we are base, and that we spend our lives with small things.

HENRY

I don't feel I do that.

MAE

Don't be offended, Henry. You are not base. Of all the people I know you are the finest. You are the person I respect and I feel most proud to know.--

(*She begins to look at him fixedly, possessed by fervor.*)

I have no one to talk to. And sometimes I feel hollow and base. And I feel I don't have a mind. But when I talk to you I do. I feel I have a mind. Why is that?

(*She moves closer to him.*)

Why is it that some people make you feel stupid and some people make you feel smart. Not smart, because I am not smart. But some people make you feel that you have something inside you. Inside your head.

(*She moves closer.*)

Why is it that you can talk, Henry, and Lloyd cannot talk? Why is that? What I'm saying, Henry, is that I want you. That I want you here with me. That I love you.

HENRY

Mae, this is unexpected.

MAE

It is unexpected, Henry.

HENRY

I have nothing to offer you.

MAE

Yes, you do. I want you.

HENRY

Me?

MAE

(*She starts to move her head toward him slowly and intensely.*)

I want your mind.

HENRY

... My mind?

MAE

(Still moving her head toward him.)

I want it.

(She kisses him intensely. They look at each other.)

HENRY

Did you feel my mind?

MAE

Yes. I did.

(She kisses him again.)

I did. I want you here.

HENRY

Here?

MAE

I want you here.

HENRY

To live here?

MAE

If you will.

(They freeze.)

Act 1, Scene 4

Scene 4

Henry exits. Mae places the spoons and pot on the mantelpiece. Then, she takes off her shoes, places a pair of trousers on the ironing board and puts out the ironing board. Lloyd gets the box with the string from the fireplace and stands down left holding it. Mae irons.

MAE

Just put it down.

(He stands still. She continues ironing.)

Put it down Lloyd.

(He stands still.)

Henry is going to stay here with us. He is going to live here. He needs a place and I want him to stay here. You can learn from Henry. If you want to, he can teach you how to read. Put the box down. I'll take it up to the bedroom. Henry's going to

sleep in the bedroom. He has a bad back and he needs to sleep in the bed. You can sleep here.--Get papers from the shed and lay them on the floor. I'll get you a blanket.--I'll take it up now.

(She takes the box from Lloyd and exits left. He is distraught. He sits on the chair on the left and cries. He puts his head on the table and freezes.)

Act 1, Scene 5

Scene 5

Mae places the ironing board against the wall. Lloyd places the pitcher of milk and the plate with bread on the table. Mae gets the plates and spoons. She places the spoons in the center and lays each plate in front of her. Henry enters and sits center. Lloyd sits left. Lloyd and Henry take a spoon each. Mae serves bread onto the plates, pours milk on the bread and passes two plates to Henry, who passes one to Lloyd and keeps the second for himself. Mae sits. They start eating.

MAE

Do you say grace before a meal, Henry?

HENRY

I do sometimes.

MAE

Would you say grace?

HENRY

I will, if you want me to.

MAE

I do.

HENRY

(Crosses his hands.)

Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endures forever. For he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.

MAE

We never said grace in this house. My father never did and I never learned how and neither did Lloyd.--Lloyd did you hear that? Henry said grace. I feel grace in my heart. I feel fresh inside as if a breeze had just gone inside my heart. What was it you said, Henry? What were these words. I don't retain the words. I never do. I find it hard to retain words I learn. It is hard for me to do the work at school. I can work on my feet all day at the ironing board. I can make myself do it, even if I am tired. But I cannot make myself retain what I learn; I have no memory. The teacher says I have no memory. And it's true I don't. I don't remember the things I learn too well. Not enough to pass the test. But I rejoice with the knowledge that I get. Not everything, but most things, make me feel joyful. Do you feel that way, Henry?

HENRY

I am not sure. I like to know things. But if I didn't remember what I learned, I don't think I would feel any pleasure.--If I didn't remember things, I would feel that I don't know them. I like to learn things so I can live according to them, according to my knowledge. What would be the use of knowing things if they don't serve you, if they don't help you shape your life.--Lloyd, do you take pleasure in learning if you forget what you have learned?

(Lloyd looks at Mae, then at Henry again.)

MAE

Lloyd doesn't like learning things.

LLOYD

I like learning things.

MAE

Why don't you then?

LLOYD

What is it I haven't learned?

(*Mae and Henry look at each other.*)

MAE

Henry, would you say grace again?

HENRY

Again?

MAE

Is that wrong?

HENRY

No. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endures forever. For he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.

(*Mae sobs.*)

Why are you crying?

MAE

I am a hungry soul. I am a longing soul. I am an empty soul.

(*She cries.*)

I cry with joy. It satisfies me to hear words that speak so lovingly to my soul.

(*Mae eats. Lloyd eats. Henry watches Mae.*)

Don't be afraid to eat from our dishes, Henry. They are clean.

(*They freeze.*)

Act 1, Scene 6

Scene 6

Lloyd places his plate and spoon over Henry's. Henry places the pitcher and bread plate on the mantelpiece and exits. Mae places the plates and spoons on the mantelpiece and gets the textbook. She sits center and reads with difficulty. She follows the written words with the fingers of both hands. Her reading is inspired. Lloyd listens to her and stares at the book.

MAE

The starfish is an animal, not a fish. He is called a fish because he lives in the water. The starfish cannot live out of the water. If he is moist and in the shade he may be able to live out of the water for a day. Starfish eat old and dead sea animals. They keep the water clean. A starfish has five arms like a star. That is why it is called a starfish. Each of the arms of the starfish has an eye in the end. These eyes do not look like our eyes. A starfish's eye cannot see. But they can tell if it is night or day. If a starfish loses an arm he can grow a new one. This takes about a year. A starfish can live five or ten years or perhaps more, no one really knows.

(*Lloyd slaps the book off the table. Mae slaps Lloyd. They freeze.*)

Act 1, Scene 7

Scene 7

Lloyd picks up the book and places it on the down-left corner of the table. He places the left chair against the wall and sits. Mae takes a notebook and pencil from the mantelpiece. She takes the book and stands on the up-right side of the table copying from the book. Henry enters and stands on the up-left corner.

HENRY

What is Lloyd to you?

(*There is a pause.*)

He's a man and he's not a blood relative. So what is he to you?

MAE

Lloyd?

(*Pause.*)

He is like family.

HENRY

But he is not.--Everyone knows he is not. What is he?

MAE

I don't know what you call what he is. If I were to ask myself I would not know what to answer.--He is not with me. You know he is not. He sleeps down here.

HENRY

I feel I am offending him. And he is offending me. So what is he.

MAE

(*Sitting on the right facing front.*)

What can I do, Henry, I don't want you to be offended. There's nothing I can do and there's nothing you can do and there is nothing Lloyd can do. He's always been here, since he was little. My dad brought him in. He said that Lloyd was a good boy and that he could keep me company. He said he was old and tired and he didn't understand what a young person like me was like. That he had no patience left and he was weary of life and he had no more desire to make things work. He didn't want to listen to me talk and he felt sorry to see me sad and lonely. He didn't want to be mean to me, but he didn't have the patience. He was sick. My dad was good but he was sad and hopeless and when my mom died he went to hell with himself. He got sick and died and he left Lloyd here and Lloyd and I took care of each other. I don't know what we are. We are related but I don't know what to call it. We are not brother and sister. We are like animals who grow up together and mate. We were mates till you came here, but not since then. I could not be his mate again, not while you are here. I am not an animal. I care about things, Henry, I do. I know some things that I never learned. It's just that I don't know what they are. I cannot grasp them.

(She goes on her knees as her left shoulder leans on the corner of the table.)

I don't want to live like a dog.

(Pause.)

Lloyd is good, Henry. And this is his home.

(Pause. She looks up.)

When you came here I thought heaven had come to this place, and I still feel so. How can there be offense here for you?

(They freeze.)

Act 1, Scene 8

Scene 8

Lloyd places his chair by the table and exits. Mae places the notebook, pencil and textbook on the mantelpiece. She places the dish with string beans center and sits. She snaps beans. Henry walks behind Mae and covers her eyes. He takes a small package from his pocket and puts it in the bowl.

MAE

What is it?

(He uncovers her eyes. She unwraps the package. It is a lipstick.)

Lipstick ...

(Henry pushes the lipstick out of the tube. He takes a mirror out of his pocket and holds it in front of her.)

A mirror.

(She holds the mirror and puts on lipstick. She puckers her lips. He kisses her.)

Oh, Henry.

(They freeze.)

Act 1, Scene 9

Scene 9

Mae places the lipstick, mirror, and dish with string beans on the mantelpiece. She places the textbook center and sits. Henry places the paper and lipstick cover on the mantelpiece. He takes the newspaper, turns the left chair toward the down-left corner and sits to read, leaning his elbow on the table. Lloyd sits on the floor, down of the right chair with his arm leaning on it.

MAE

(Reading.)

This is a hermit crab. He is called a hermit because he lives in empty shells that once belonged to other animals. When he is little he likes to crawl into the shells of water snails. When he grows larger he finds a larger shell. Often he tries several shells before he finds the one that fits. Sometimes he wants the shell of another hermit crab and then there is a fight. Sometimes the owner is pulled out. Sometimes the owner wins and stays.

(Lloyd lifts himself up to look at Henry. He mouths a curse. Mae turns to look at Lloyd, then looks at Henry. Henry turns to look at Mae, then he looks at Lloyd. They freeze.)

Act 2

Act 2, Scene 1: Author's scene 10

ACT TWO

Scene 10

Henry enters left carrying a notebook, pencil and a few bills. He sits left. He transfers figures from the bills to the ledger. Lloyd enters right. He stands up-center. He reaches into his pocket for a medical prescription and stretches his arm in Henry's direction. He sits to the right. The italicized words represent a stuttering.

LLOYD

They gave me *this*.

HENRY

(Reads what's on the paper while still in Lloyd's hand. He returns to his papers.)

That's the prescription for your medicine.

LLOYD

They said I should buy *this*.

(Pause.)

They said I should *buy it*.

HENRY

Did you?

LLOYD

No.

HENRY

Why not.

LLOYD

I went to the *clinic*.

HENRY

(Without looking at him.)

I'm glad you did.

LLOYD

It took a *while*. I thought they *kept* me a long time. I went *early* and just came back.

HENRY

How do you feel?

LLOYD

I don't feel *better*--I feel *worse*.

HENRY

Why is that?

LLOYD

They have *instruments* there. They *stuck instruments* in me.

HENRY

What did they say?

LLOYD

I have to take *medicine-pills*. I have to buy them. They said I have to *swallow* the pills.

HENRY

I'm glad you went.

LLOYD

(*Stretches his arm to show Henry the prescription.*)

They gave me *this*. They said I should *buy* this.

(*He puts the prescription on the table.*)

They said I should *buy* it.

HENRY

(*With contained anger.*)

You should get the medicine, Lloyd. You should take it and get it over with. You should take the medication and get well. You should not walk around with an illness that's eating your insides. Get the medicine. Do as you are told.

(*They freeze.*)

Act 2, Scene 2: Author's scene 11

Scene 11

Henry exits. Lloyd takes the box of pills from the mantelpiece and empties it on the table. He sits center. Mae enters right, wiping her wet hands with her skirt. She sits right. Lloyd puts a pill in his mouth. A moment later he spits it.

MAE

What are they?

LLOYD

Pills.

MAE

Lloyd ... What are you doing?

(*He cleans his tongue.*)

Does it taste bad?

LLOYD

Yeah.

MAE

:

(*She picks up the pill and sits.*)

Try it again.

(*He puts it in his mouth.*)

Swallow it.

(*He swallows and chokes. She stands by him and pushes the pill down his throat. She looks at him.*)

Did you swallow it?

(*She looks at him.*)

What do you feel?

(*He makes a face. She sits and puts the pills in the box.*)

How did you get them?

LLOYD

(*Defensively.*)

I bought them.--I took the money.--From Henry. --From his trousers.--I took the money from his trousers.--I don't care.--He owes me money.--For rent.--For my bed.--He took my bed.--Like a crab.--He got into my bed like a crab.--I took it.--I didn't steal it, because it belonged to me.--Because I needed to get my medicine.--And he never gave me what he owed me.--I had to ask him for it.--And he never gave it to me.--I asked him.--And he never gave it to me.--And he came here only to take things from me.--Like a crab.

(*Henry enters left. He is in his underwear. He carries his pants over his left arm. He holds a change purse in his right hand. He walks down left and stands there. He is stunned.*)

HENRY

Someone took money from my purse.--There is less money here than I should have.--Some of the money I had is gone.

MAE

Lloyd took it.

HENRY

(*He sits.*)

Well, tell him to give it back.

MAE

He took it for his medicine.

HENRY

He went to my purse and took it?

MAE

He needed money for his medicine.

(*Pause.*)

Would you let Lloyd have that money?

HENRY

Have Lloyd have my money?

(*Pause.*)

MAE

He'll pay it back.

HENRY

How will he pay it back?

MAE

(*To Lloyd.*)

... Lloyd...?

(*Lloyd looks at Mae.*)

HENRY

How will he pay it back. How will Lloyd get money to pay me back?

(*Pause.*)

How much money did he take?

MAE

... Lloyd...?

LLOYD

I don't know how much I took.

HENRY

How will he pay it back if he doesn't know how much he took?

(*Pause.*)

Tell him I want to know how much he took.

LLOYD

I went to the clinic.--And they put those instruments in me.--And they said I had to buy that medicine.--And I couldn't find someone to help me buy that medicine.--I went to the pharmacy. --And they said I had to pay for it.--And Henry had money but he wouldn't pay for it.--And he took my bed.--And he can take anything he wants from me.--And I had to buy that medicine.--So I took the money from him.

HENRY

Ask him when he took it.

LLOYD

I took it while he slept.

HENRY

How much did he take?

(*Pause.*)

MAE

Lloyd can't count, Henry.

HENRY

(*He takes money out of the purse, puts it on the table and counts it. He does mental subtraction.*)

Tell him he took one fifty four.

(*Mae looks at Lloyd.*)

Is that what he spent? Does he still have any of that money?

(*Lloyd reaches into his pocket.*)

Tell him to put it on the table.

(*Lloyd does. Henry counts the money, then does mental subtraction. He puts the coins in the purse and goes to the door.*)

Tell him he owes me one thirty eight. And tell him I wish he'll pay it back.

(*He exits. Mae goes to the door and looks in the direction Henry has walked. They freeze.*)

Act 2, Scene 3: Author's scene 12

Scene 12

Mae puts a pair of trousers on the ironing board and puts the ironing board out. Lloyd places the box of pills on the mantelpiece and stands on top of the table.

LLOYD

There is a reason why it happened to him and not to me.

MAE

I wish it had happened to you.

LLOYD

Ha!--It couldn't have happened to me. I'm strong. He's weak and old. That's why he fell.

(*Doing an exaggerated demonstration of someone walking on dangerous ground.*)

I can walk on wet stones and I don't fall. Look. I can run on wet stones. I can stand on my own two feet. Look!

(*He jumps to the floor and stands with his feet apart.*)

Try and push me. Go on. Push me.

(She ignores him. He jumps on the table in a prone position with his legs crossed and his hands under his head.)

I wish he had drowned. I wish he had fallen in the water and drowned. He's old. His legs couldn't hold him. That's why he fell.

(He jumps to the floor and runs across jumping up in the air making sounds as he goes up and down. He does this several times, then holds an athletic pose.)

Can he do that?

MAE

(Still ironing.)

No, he can't. He's paralyzed. He may be a cripple. You know he can't do that!

LLOYD

(Lies on the table with his hands under his head.)

He couldn't do it before he fell. That's why he fell. He's old. He was falling apart. That's why he fell. Now he can't even move.--Look!

(He does several cartwheels.)

Can he do that?

MAE

No, he can't.

LLOYD

(Sits on the table with his arms and legs in a body-builder's pose.)

He has no muscle. I wouldn't fall if I had to walk on wet stones. I can run on wet stones. Like this.

(He demonstrates.)

I wish he had fell in the water. I wish he had drowned. So now he can't walk.

(Short pause.)

Who's going to take care of him?

MAE

We are.

(Lloyd exits right. The sound of vomiting is heard. She freezes.)

Act 2, Scene 4: Author's scene 13

Scene 13

Mae puts the ironing board alongside the wall. Lloyd enters left with the cup with oatmeal and the spoon. He places the right chair away from the table. Henry enters. He sits on the chair to the right. His left side is paralyzed and deformed. His trousers are rolled to his knees. He is barechested and wears a kitchen towel as a bib. He wears a necktie under the towel. He holds a tin cup of milk in his left hand. Lloyd is perched against the table next to Henry. He feeds oatmeal to him. Henry moves the oatmeal around his mouth, then he lets it dribble out or he spits it. Henry's speech is incomprehensible.

LLOYD

Stop it!

(*Scooping the spilled oatmeal from Henry's chin and bib and putting it back in his mouth.*)

Stop doing that.--Don't do that.

(*Henry lets the oatmeal out.*)

You just quit that.--Chew it.--Swallow it.

(*Henry lets the oatmeal out. Lloyd starts scooping it.*)

Stop that! Stop doing that! You better stop that, Henry.--

(*Henry lets the oatmeal out.*)

Quit that. You just quit that.

(*Henry slaps the cup of milk and spills it on the floor.*)

That is it, Henry.

(*Taking Henry's bib off.*)

You get your own food.

HENRY

It Spilled!

LLOYD

You did it on purpose.

HENRY

It spilled.

LLOYD

No, it didn't. You spilled it.

HENRY

Clean it!

LLOYD

No, I won't. You clean it. I saw you do it. You clean it.

HENRY

Clean it!

LLOYD

I won't clean it. You clean it.

HENRY

Clean it!

LLOYD

You clean it!

HENRY

Mae...!

(*Pause.*)

Mae...!

(*Pause.*)

Mae...!

MAE

(*Enters. She carries a bundle of clothes and a cleaning rag.*)

What is it?

HENRY

(*Pointing to the milk.*)

Look!

MAE

What happened?

(*Mae puts the clothes on the bench and stands by Henry with the rag.*)

HENRY

He spilled it!

LLOYD

I didn't spill it! He spilled it!

MAE

So clean it up!

HENRY

Clean it!

LLOYD

I'm going to kill him.

MAE

Kill him if you want.--He can't talk straight any more.

(*She starts wiping the oatmeal off Henry.*)

Clean up the milk!

HENRY

Clean it!

(Lloyd takes Henry's bib and starts wiping the milk.)

MAE

Did you feed the pigs?

LLOYD

Yeah.

MAE

Did Henry eat?

LLOYD

He spilled the milk.

MAE

Did he eat!

(Lloyd doesn't answer.)

Did he eat!

(Pause.)

Did you eat, Henry?

HENRY

I ate.

MAE

He ate. Why didn't you say he ate.

(Mae walks to the left door and opens it.)

LLOYD

I'm going to kill him.

MAE

(Stands on the threshold and turns to Lloyd.)

So kill him.

(They freeze.)

Act 2, Scene 5: Author's scene 14

Scene 14

Mae exits. Lloyd places the bib, the oatmeal cup and spoon, and the tin cup on the mantelpiece. He takes the textbook and sits center. He attempts to read. He first makes the sound of the letter. Then, he speaks the name of the letter and traces it

with his finger on the table. Then, he puts the sounds of the letters together. Henry sits to the right facing front. He mimics Lloyd's effort and laughs in silent convulsions.

LLOYD

S·

HENRY

S·

LLOYD

T· St·

HENRY

T· St·

LLOYD

A·

HENRY

A·

LLOYD

Stop that!

HENRY

A·

LLOYD

Stop it, Henry!

HENRY

A·

LLOYD

R· Ar·

HENRY

R· Ar·

LLOYD

Sta·

HENRY

Sta·

LLOYD

Star·

(The left door opens. Mae stands outside and looks in.)

HENRY

Star

LLOYD

F

HENRY

F

LLOYD

I Fi

HENRY

I Fi

LLOYD

S Fis

HENRY

S Fis

LLOYD

Stop it. Cut it out. Fish.

HENRY

Fish.

(Mae enters left. She carries a bundle of clothes.)

LLOYD

Fish.

HENRY

Fish.

MAE

Someone took my money. Who did?

(Neither looks at her.)

Who did!--Did you Lloyd!

LLOYD

I didn't. Fish.

HENRY

Fish.

MAE

Did Henry? Did you take the money, Henry?

(*She closes the door.*)

Answer me. Did you take the money! Someone took it! You took it, Lloyd. Hand it over.

LLOYD

I didn't take it.

MAE

Hand it over.

LLOYD

I didn't take it!

MAE

Who took it then!

LLOYD

Henry took it.

MAE

(*To Lloyd.*)

He didn't take it. He can't walk.

LLOYD

Yes, he can. You know he can. Walk, Henry. Show Mae how you can walk. Walk! He can walk.

MAE

(*Enraged.*)

Walk!

HENRY

I can't walk.

LLOYD

You can walk!

MAE

Don't say he can walk, Lloyd. He can't walk. He didn't take the money.

(*She notices the book.*)

What are you doing with my book?

(He lowers his head. She is perplexed.)

What are you doing?

(She takes the book and holds it protectively.)

Don't mess my book.

HENRY

He was messing it.

(He laughs.)

MAE

Shut up, Henry.

HENRY

He was saying "Fish."

(He laughs.)

MAE

Everything turns bad for me.

(They freeze.)

Act 2, Scene 6: Author's scene 15

Scene 15

Lloyd exits. Mae places the book on the mantelpiece and stands by the down-right corner of the table. Henry walks to the left and sits. His hand is inside his fly. He handles himself.

HENRY

Mae. I still feel desire.--I am sexual.--I have not lost my sexuality. --Mae, make love to me.

(Mae doesn't answer. He continues touching himself.)

You are my wife. I want you. I feel the same desires. I feel the same needs. I have not changed.

(He holds on to the table and begins to stand.)

Mae, I have not stopped wanting you.--I can make love to you.--I can satisfy you.

(Supporting himself on the table, he slides toward her.)

I am potent.--I can make you happy. Kiss me, Mae.--

(He grabs her wrist.)

Tell me you still love me. Kiss me. Let me feel you close to me.--You think a cripple has no feelings.--I'm not crippled in my parts.--It gets hard.

(He puts his right arm around her waist.)

Mae, I love you.

(He holds her tighter. He starts moving his pelvis against her.)

I'm coming....

(He starts sliding down to the floor.)

I'm coming.... I'm coming.... I'm coming.... I'm coming....

(He collapses. She falls on the chair. She stands and leans against the table.)

MAE

You can walk, Henry. You took my money.

(They freeze.)

Act 2, Scene 7: Author's scene 16

Scene 16

Mae exits left. Henry is on the floor trying to sit on the chair. Lloyd enters right. He helps Henry up and closes his fly. Mae enters with Henry's box and lifts it up in the air.

HENRY

Don't Mae.

MAE

(Throwing the box at him.)

Get out!

(Lloyd exits right.)

HENRY

Don't throw things at me, Mae!

MAE

You took the money!

HENRY

You hurt me, Mae! You threw that box at me and hurt me!

MAE

You took the money!

HENRY

I didn't take it!

MAE

You took it! Where is it?

(She moves toward him.)

HENRY

I didn't take it!

(Mae reaches in his right pocket. She pulls out a wad of bills. She grabs his necktie, turns it back and pulls it down. Lloyd puts his head in through the left door and begins to enter. Mae and Lloyd speak the following speeches at the same time.)

MAE

I feed you and I take care of you! And you steal from me? You eat my food and you sleep in my bed and you steal from me! You're a pig, Henry. You're worse than Lloyd!

LLOYD

Kill him, Mae! Kill him! Kill him!

(He climbs on the table on all fours.)

He's no good! Kill him, Mae! He's no good! He's a thief!

(Henry falls off the chair. Mae falls on her knees next to him. Lloyd jumps off the table. He lets out a hysterical laugh.)

LLOYD

Look he's bleeding!

(He chants and dances.)

Henry's bleeding! Henry's bleeding! Henry's bleeding!

MAE

Shut up, Lloyd!

(There is silence.)

HENRY

It was my money. Lloyd never paid me. He never paid me. He never paid me what he owed me.

MAE

You could have let him have it. Just because he takes care of you. You could have let him have your money. He takes care of you.

HENRY

He never paid me.

MAE

(She looks up to the sky.)

Can't I have a decent life?

(There is a pause.)

LLOYD

But I love you, Mae.

HENRY

I love you, Mae.

(They freeze.)

Act 2, Scene 8: Author's scene 17

Scene 17

Lloyd places the box inside the fireplace. He closes the left door. Mae gets the empty box from the fireplace and places it on the right chair. She places the bundle of women's clothes from under the bench on the table. She is packing clothes in the box. Lloyd stands up-left. He watches her. Henry sits left.

MAE

(As she packs.)

I'm leaving, Lloyd. I'm going somewhere else. I'm leaving you and Henry. Both of you are no good. I got rotten luck. I work too hard and the two of you keep sucking my blood. I'm going to look for a better place to be.

(Lloyd sits on the chair upstage of the table.)

Just a place where the two of you are not sucking my blood. I'm going to find myself a job. And a room to live in. Far away from you. Where I don't have my blood sucked.

LLOYD

Don't go, Mae.

HENRY

Don't go.

MAE

I'm going and that's that.

LLOYD

Where are you going?

MAE

I don't know, Lloyd. I'm just going.

LLOYD

I'll do what you say.

MAE

I don't care what you do.

(Closing the box.)

You do what you want. Henry too. I don't care what he does.

LLOYD

Stay, Mae.

HENRY

Please.

MAE

I'm going. You take care of Henry, Lloyd.

(*She goes to the door.*)

LLOYD

Don't go, Mae.

HENRY

Please.

MAE

Goodbye.

(*She exits through the right door and closes the door. Lloyd is still for a few seconds. He then runs to the door, knocking down his chair. He exits.*)

LLOYD

(*Shouting.*)

Mae...!

(*Henry makes a plaintive sound.*)

Mae...!

HENRY

Mae...!

LLOYD

(*Offstage.*)

Mae...!

(*Henry makes a plaintive sound.*)

Stop, Mae!

HENRY

Stop!

(*Lloyd enters running. He takes the rifle. Henry makes incoherent sounds. Lloyd exits running.*)

LLOYD

Mae...! Stop...! Stop, Mae!

HENRY

Mae...!

LLOYD

Mae, stop...!

HENRY

Mae...!

LLOYD

Mae! Mae! Mae!

(*A shot is heard. There is silence. Another shot is heard.*)

HENRY

(*Plainatively.*)

... Mae ...

(*Lloyd appears in threshold carrying Mae. She is drenched in blood and unconscious. Lloyd turns to Henry.*)

LLOYD

She's not leaving, Henry.

(*Henry lets out a whimper. Lloyd places Mae on the table. Mae begins to move.*)

MAE

Like the starfish, I live in the dark and my eyes see only a faint light. It is faint and yet it consumes me. I long for it. I thirst for it. I would die for it. Lloyd, I am dying.

(*Mae collapses. Lloyd sobs. Henry lets out a plaintive cry. They freeze.*)

END